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Master's Thesis

# Better than Nothing? The Unexpected Impact of CSR Information Clarity on Consumer's Reaction in CSR Activities: Mediating Role by Perceived Sincerity

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2018

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**Better than Nothing?**  
**The Unexpected Impact of CSR Information Clarity**  
**on Consumer's Reaction in CSR Activities:**  
**Mediating Role by Perceived Sincerity**

A thesis  
submitted to the Graduate School of UNIST  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Science

Min-kyu Kim

12. 22. 2017  
Approved by



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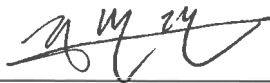
**Better than Nothing?**  
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**Mediating Role by Perceived Sincerity**

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## **Abstract**

This research aims to explain the unexpected effects of CSR activities from the consumer's point of view by taking into account consumers' perceived sincerity when vague CSR information is presented. The degree of disclosure on CSR information was manipulated by changing the way donation details were expressed in an advertisement. Two surveys were conducted. The results indicate that the degree of CSR information's disclosure significantly influences consumers' brand attitude, purchase intention, recommendation intention, and perceived sincerity. Interestingly, consumers tend to have more favorable brand attitudes, purchase intentions, and higher perceived sincerity in the controlled condition without any CSR information than in the less detailed CSR information condition. Furthermore, there is a mediation effect of perceived sincerity in the relationship between the degree of CSR information disclosure and consumers' perceived brand attitudes, purchase intentions, and recommendation intentions. This research paper has implications in the research field of CSR. Marketers should be cautious about consumer perception on CSR information clarity when implementing the CSR activities. Marketers tend to simply assume that using CSR activities as a marketing strategy would automatically bring positive outcomes. However, our research findings show marketing activities with an unclear CSR message would result in the worse outcomes in comparison with those activities without any CSR message.

## **Keywords**

Corporate Social Responsibility, Cause Marketing, Information Clarity, Perceived Sincerity



## Contents

I . Introduction -----	1
II . Literature Reviews -----	2
III . Study 1 -----	4
3.1 Hypotheses -----	4
3.2 Procedure -----	5
3.3 Data Collection -----	6
3.4 Result -----	7
IV . Study 2 -----	8
4.1 Hypotheses -----	8
4.2 Procedure -----	9
4.3 Data Collection -----	11
4.4 Result -----	11
V . Conclusion and Discussion -----	14
VI . Future Research -----	15



## Lists of Figures & Tables

Figure 1	23
Figure 2	24
Figure 3	25
Figure 4	26
Figure 5	27
Figure 6	28
Figure 7	29
Figure 8	30
Figure 9	31
Table 1	24
Table 2	25
Table 3	26
Table 4	28
Table 5	29
Table 6	30
Table 7	31
Table 8	32
Table 9	32
Table 10	33
Table 11	33
Table 12	34
Table 13	34
Table 14	35
Table 15	35
Table 16	36

## Introduction

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) marketing is the marketing strategy that a corporation pursues the economic value and public value at the same time. CSR activities are becoming more important in terms of marketing strategy to attract consumers and enhance brand attitude. Over 80% of the *Fortune* 500 companies deals with CSR topics on their websites (Bhattacharya and Sen 2004).

There are a great number of studies about CSR activities in terms of both positive and negative influences on companies which are implementing the CSR strategy. CSR provides noticeable advantages for companies including gratifying social responsibilities, satisfying particular market-related objectives, and improving corporate image (Brown and Dacin 1997; Ross, Patterson, and Stutts 1992; Smith and Alcorn 1991), which later leads to increasing purchase behavior and recommendation intention (Sen and Morwitz 1996; Smith and Stodghill 1994).

While those papers have shown the positive effects of CSR, there are also negative viewpoints regarding the CSR. Several studies have shown that using CSR activities do not always generate the expected results (Newman and Cain 2014; Sen and Bhattacharya 2001; Torelli, Monga, and Kaikati 2012; Webb and Mohr 1998). Some researchers have explained the unexpected and unpleasant results by focusing on companies' organizational issues such that CSR activities should fit well with a company's characteristic, purpose, and corporate image (Creyer and Ross 1997). While this organizational-oriented perspective somewhat explains the unexpected results of CSR activities, this view is not able to fully account for the effect from the consumer side. Thus, this paper aims to fill this gap by adopting the consumer's perceived sincerity, which is a standard of moral values and idealistic purpose on CSR activities in the research model. Particularly, the consumer's viewpoint on the information that the corporation provides; whether the information includes clear details about the CSR activities or not, is included as a key variable in this research. It is presumable that consumers would be more favorable towards the CSR activities with clear, detailed information compared to the ones with less clear information.

By conducting two different studies with different types of conditions, which deals with the degree of CSR information's disclosure, these studies could compare consumers' responses towards different CSR activities. In order to measure the consumers' attitudinal responses, the

present research adopts purchase intention, recommendation intention, perceived brand attitude, and the perceived sincerity of the company in the model. By doing so, this research examines whether CSR activities would always bring positive outcomes to companies.

## **Literature Reviews**

Corporate social responsibility (CSR), also known as prosocial corporate endeavors (Murray and Vogel 1997), action of corporate social commitment to gratify social needs (Angelidis and Ibrahim 1993; Enderle and Tavis 1998), is the management technique which handles the legal, financial, and ethical responsibility, concerning people and parties who can affect corporate activities or can be affected by corporate activities. Prior researches defined the CSR as firms' business practices in their discretion that are aimed to improve societal well-being (Korschun, Bhattacharya, and Swain 2014), and duties of the firm to society (Smith 2003).

Nowadays, CSR has become more important regarding a company's marketing strategy. Companies' interest in CSR activities has become vast over the last decades. About 90% of the *Fortune* 500 companies have obvious CSR activities (Kotler and Lee 2004; Lichtenstein, Drumwright, and Bridgette 2004). Not only do they perform CSR activities, but also provide information about CSR activities. Many firms provide CSR details in annual reports and on their websites, emphasizing the importance of CSR. (Servaes and Tamayo 2013). A Company's investment in CSR activities has increased based on the positive point of views. 76% of executives say that CSR positively contributes to long-term shareholder value (McKinsey 2010). Since firms have realized the importance of the CSR, there were many researches on the relationship between CSR and a firm's financial performance (Hillman and Keim 2001; Hull and Rothenberg 2008; Luo and Bhattacharya 2006; Luo and Bhattacharya 2009; Mishra and Modi 2016; Servaes and Tamayo 2013). Consumers, as well as companies recognize the importance of CSR activities. *Ipsos* (2013) shows that 77% of consumers think that companies should contribute more to the society.

CSR activity is employed by for-profit companies, not only non-profit organizations, to generate financial benefits while engaging in socially desirable activities. Since the keen relationship between a corporate's donation activity and the consumer's purchase is generally assumed in CSR strategies, there has been a positive perspective on CSR (Smith and Alcorn 1991).

There were papers which shows the advantage of CSR to the company's performance and stakeholder. Superior CSR activity can reduce costs by increasing operational efficiencies (Hart and Ahuja 1996). Furthermore, CSR makes stakeholder to have a positive perception of the firm (Hull and Rothenberg 2008), and helps to improve stakeholder relationships, which is related with a firm's positive performance. CSR activity is beneficial for not merely companies' performance and stakeholder, but also consumers' attitude. Polonsky and Wood (2001), in their paper, note that consumers are likely to be favorable towards the marketing activities that contribute to the society while satisfying consumers' individual needs. A bunch of other research studies have also shown that CSR tends to increase consumers' positive attitude towards affiliated companies and brands (Brown and Dacin 1997; Ross, Patterson, and Stutts 1992) which in turn increase consumers' purchase intention (Sen and Morwitz 1996; Smith and Stodghill 1994). Also, CSR affects consumer loyalty and trust. CSR activities increase consumer loyalty and support behaviors (Du, Bhattacharya, and Sen 2007). Consumer's awareness of a firm's motives for engaging in CSR actions affects consumer trust (Viachos et al. 2009). Furthermore, a company's CSR activities tend to positively affect product evaluation as well as brand attitude (Chernev and Blair 2015). This positive product evaluation would be helpful to improve the brand image perceived by the consumer, increase consumer purchase intention and recommendation intention. CSR activities are one method that firms deploy to have a positive reputation (Fombrun and Shanely 1990). And obtaining the good reputation helps firms realize value (Fombrun 1996).

On the other hand, CSR may not generate the expected positive outcomes in a certain situation. A firm's CSR initiatives should be in balance with social values and expectations (Lerner and Fryxell 1998). And consumers tend to rate the bad score in morality and negatively respond to CSR activities when a company's CSR activities seem to pursue the company's own profits rather than mutual benefits among the company, consumers, and societies (Newman and Cain 2014). As a result of the companies' interest on CSR activities increasing, consumer's attention to the CSR activities also goes up. According to Creyer and Ross (1997), consumers may doubt companies' real intention of engaging in CSR activities because it seems to be too ideal to harmonize between satisfying public interest and making profit for companies. This skepticism sometimes leads consumers to decrease their purchase intention (Sen and Bhattacharya 2001; Webb and Mohr 1998). CSR activities do not always lead to good reputation.

Strahilevitz (2003) shown that CSR initiatives do not improve the reputation of companies that are perceived to be unethical by consumers.

To measure the consumer's positive and negative attitudes toward the CSR activities, in this study, brand attitude, consumer purchase intention, consumer recommendation intention, and consumer perceived sincerity were used. Brand attitudes show a consumer's attitude towards the brand related with a given advertisement, where the advertisement includes different messages in several conditions. Brand attitudes describe the degree of consumer's likeability (or unlikeability) and positive (or negative) view of a brand (De Pelsmacker et al. 2007). In other words, attitude toward the brand is a relatively durable summary evaluation of the brand that probably energizes behavior (Spears and Singh 2004). In regard of CSR activities, a company's prosocial behavior can change the product assessments even when consumers can immediately check and taste the product (Chernev and Blair 2015). Perceived sincerity is the other measure for consumer attitude. Sincerity is the standard of being trustworthy and heartfelt (Perepelkin and Zhang 2014). Sincerity which means cheerful, down-to-earth, honest, and wholesome is the five dimensions of brand personality (Aaker 1997). Prior researches have shown that among the brand personalities, the sincerity has the strongest effect on brand trust (Folse et al. 2012; Sung and Kim 2010). And Maehle et al (2011) shown that there are characteristics of brands which have strong associations with sincerity like good service experience, relationship with memories about family and childhood, high quality, and high moral values. Likewise there are many kinds of characteristics of sincere brands, among these, this paper focuses on the moral values. And there are also negative views of consumers concerning the relationship between company sincerity and CSR activities. Consumers rated efforts that achieved both benevolent and private benefits as worse than similar actions that created no prosocial benefit (Newman and Cain 2014).

## **Study 1**

### **Hypotheses**

According to the advertising research findings, ambiguous and subjective advertising messages tend to bring higher doubt and lower perceived ad reliability to consumers (Darely and Smith 1993; Holbrook 1978; Kim and Lee 2009). To minimize those negative consumer

responses, this stream of research suggests that companies need to provide clear and objective advertising messages to consumers.

Extending these findings to our research domain, this study assumes that consumers' responses would be idiosyncratic between CSR information with more details and less details. Especially, the clarity of CSR information that companies provide was manipulated in the experiment. If consumers would be given the clear information about where, whom, and how much a company donates from its sales and/or profits, they are likely to be more favorable towards a company's CSR activities. On the other hand, in an unclear CSR condition, it could be assumed that consumers' responses towards CSR activities are less favorable. In this study, degree of CSR information's disclosure in a company's advertisement refers to whether the detailed information is provided or not. With the less detailed CSR information, consumers may be suspicious regarding a company's CSR implementation, which in turn, decrease purchase intention, recommendation intention, and perceived brand attitude.

Based on the above theoretical reasons, the following hypotheses are proposed.

**H1.** Consumers are likely to have more positive Brand Attitude (BA) when they are exposed to the CSR information with more details compared to the one with less details

**H2.** Consumers are likely to have more Purchase Intention (PI) when they are exposed to the CSR information with more details compared to the one with less detail

**H3.** Consumers are likely to have more Recommendation Intention (RI) when they are exposed to the CSR information with more details compared to the one with less detail

For better understanding, the conceptual research model is provided in Figure 1.

**Insert Figure 1 about here**

## **Procedure**

To test the hypotheses discussed previously, independent variable and dependent variables were adopted as follows.

### ***Degree of CSR Information's disclosure (Independent Variable)***

"Consumers are more skeptical of subjective than of objective claims. Consumers were more likely to disbelieve the ad claim when the donation size was stated subjectively than

objectively” (Ford, Smith, and John 1990). Degree of CSR information’s disclosure was manipulated by changing the way the donation details was expressed in an advertisement. For a less detail information condition, an advertisement which stated: ‘a portion of profits will be donated to neighbors in needs’ was used. For a more detailed information condition, the advertisement stated the sentences ‘details of donation will be opened clearly in the internet homepage on each month 28’. In the controlled condition, there are no mentions about a company’s CSR activities.

### ***Brand Attitude, Purchase Intention, and Recommendation Intention (Dependent Variables)***

The dependent variables in this study were the brand attitude, consumer purchase intention, and consumer recommendation intention. Firstly, brand attitude was measured by four 7-point bipolar scales anchored by ‘negative/positive’, ‘dislike/like’, ‘not trustworthy/trustworthy’, and ‘unfavorable/favorable’ (Nan and Heo 2007; Völckner, Sattler, and Kaufmann 2008). Second, consumer purchase intention was measured by three 7-point bipolar scales anchored by ‘very unlikely/very likely’, ‘impossible/possible’, and ‘improbable/probable’ (Lafferty and Goldsmith 1999). Consumer recommendation intention was measured on a two item 7-point scale. The two items were (1) “I will recommend this company and product to others”, and (2) “I am likely to make positive comments about this company and product to others” (Galan-Ladero, Galera-Casquet, and Wymer 2013). Two items were anchored by the terms “strongly disagree”, and “strongly agree”.

### **Data Collection**

Pretest for choosing an unbiased product was conducted. Most neutral product was needed based on the research that shown CSR activities including a hedonic product are more effective in inducing willingness to buy and gripping purchase than CSR activities that are related with a utilitarian product (Strahilevitz and Myers 1998). Five products including water in the bottle, chocolate cereal bar, wet tissue, jelly, and chocolate were selected for the pretest. Further, we measured whether those products are hedonic, neutral, or utilitarian using ten items adopted from the previous research (Koschate-Fischer, Stefan, and Hoyer 2012). Those ten items were asked to check if five products are delightful, enjoyable, fun, exciting, thrilling, effective, functional, helpful, necessary, and practical (Koschate-Fischer, Stefan, and Hoyer 2012). Ten

items were anchored by the terms “strongly disagree”, and “strongly agree”. 19 participants completed the pretesting questionnaire, and the result revealed that chocolate cereal bar is the most neutral product. As a result, chocolate cereal bar was chosen to use in the main research surveys.

Three main research surveys were conducted on the internet, using the Google survey form. First, the randomly selected respondents were exposed to one of three conditions of CSR advertisements. Then they were asked to answer the questionnaires. Those responses were automatically stored in the Google database. The advertisement scenarios used in the surveys are attached in the appendix.

## Results

A total of 150 participants completed the questionnaire. There were 97 males and 53 females. The mean age was 25.82. 50 participants were exposed to a controlled condition (advertisement (1)), 50 participants were exposed to a less detail information condition (advertisement (2)), and 50 participants were exposed to a more detail information condition (advertisement (3)).

**Insert Table 1 about here**

**Insert Figure 2 about here**

Regarding brand attitude, the inter-correlation between the four items is satisfactory at Cronbach alpha level of .94 ( $>0.7$ ). As shown in Table 1 and Figure 2, an ANOVA analysis is used to test the hypotheses 1. According to the results, brand attitude is highest in a more detailed CSR information condition, and lowest in a less detailed CSR information condition. Therefore, H1 is supported. Interestingly and surprisingly, the results also show that brand attitude is relatively higher in a controlled condition without any CSR information than in a less detailed, ambiguous CSR information condition. This result implies that using CSR marketing may not always bring a positive brand attitude when it comes with the unclear CSR information.

**Insert Table 2 about here**

**Insert Figure 3 about here**

As seen in Table 2 and Figure 3, consumers' purchase intention is highest in a more detailed CSR information condition, and lowest in a less detailed CSR information condition. Thus, H2 is supported. Same as the previous results, here we also find that consumers' purchase



intention is higher in a controlled condition without any CSR information than in a less detailed CSR information condition. The inter-correlation between the three items was satisfactory at Cronbach alpha level of .86(>0.7) as well.

**Insert Table 3 about here**

**Insert Figure 4 about here**

In terms of consumer recommendation intention, the inter-correlation between the two items was satisfactory at Cronbach alpha level of .95(>0.7). As depicted in Table 3 and Figure 4, consumer recommendation intention is highest in a more detailed CSR information condition, and lowest in a less detailed CSR information condition just like those previous two tests. Not only brand attitude and consumers' purchase intention, but also consumers' recommendation intention is also higher in a controlled condition without any CSR information than in a less detailed CSR information condition.

Conclusively, we can say that consumers are likely to be negative towards the unclear and ambiguous CSR information with less details compared to the clear and detail CSR information, and even compared to the non-CSR advertising message.

Result of study1 indicates that the degree of CSR information's disclosure significantly influences consumers' brand attitude, purchase intentions, and recommendation intention.

Furthermore, and very interestingly, consumers tend to show less favorable responses towards the CSR activities with less detailed and ambiguous information than no CSR activities.

## **Study 2**

### **Hypotheses**

As a result in study 1, an unclear message on the advertisement decreases the consumer's perceived brand attitude, purchase intention, and recommendation intention. There was a limitation in study 1. Study 1 didn't show the reason why those results were given. And a number of sample was a little. For reveal the reason why the results of study 1 were given, and for more significant result, study 2 was conducted. There were two big differences between study 1 and 2. First, one advertisement was added therefore four advertisements were stated. In study 2, the degree of CSR information's disclosure was manipulated by four conditions, which is more detail than study 1. Second, to determine the reason of study 1's result, we believe that

there is a psychological mechanism. Thus, consumer perceived sincerity was added as a mediator. The mediating effect of perceived sincerity between the degree of CSR information's disclosure and brand attitude, purchase intention, and recommendation intention is expected based on prior researches.

Based on the study 1, the following hypotheses are proposed.

**H1.** Consumers are likely to have more positive Brand attitude (BA) when they are exposed to the CSR information with more details compared to the one with less details

**H2.** Consumers are likely to have more Purchase Intention (PI) when they are exposed to the CSR information with more details compared to the one with less detail

**H3.** Consumers are likely to have more Recommendation Intention (RI) when they are exposed to the CSR information with more details compared to the one with less detail

**H4.** Consumers are likely to have more Perceived Sincerity(PS) when they are exposed to the CSR information with more details compared to the one with less detail

**H5.** The relationship between the degree of CSR information's disclosure from the company and BA will be mediated by consumer's perceived sincerity of the company

**H6.** The relationship between the degree of CSR information's disclosure from the company and PI will be mediated by consumer's perceived sincerity of the company

**H7.** The relationship between the degree of CSR information's disclosure from the company and RI will be mediated by consumer's perceived sincerity of the company

The conceptual research model in study 2 is provided in Figure 5.

**Insert Figure 5 about here**

## **Procedure**

To test the hypotheses discussed previously, independent variable, dependent variables, and a mediator were adopted as follows.

### ***Degree of CSR Information's disclosure (Independent Variable)***

In study 2, different messages on the advertisement were used to manipulate the degree of CSR information's disclosure. There were four advertisements which stated donation details or not. For a less detail information condition, an advertisement which stated: 'a portion of

profits will be donated to neighbors in needs’ was used. Other two advertisements were different from study 1. For the more detail information condition, an advertisement which stated ‘14% of profits will be donated to corporation for poorly-fed children’. For the more detail and information open to public condition, the advertisement stated the sentences ‘details of donation will be opened clearly in the internet homepage on each month 28’. In the controlled condition, there is no mentioning about company’s CSR activities.

### ***Brand Attitude, Purchase Intention, and Recommendation Intention (Dependent Variables)***

First, brand attitude was measured by two item 7-point bipolar scales anchored by ‘negative/positive’ and ‘dislike/like’ (Nan and Heo 2007; Völckner, Sattler, and Kaufmann 2008). Second, consumer’s purchase intention was measured by 7-point bipolar scales anchored by ‘improbable/probable’ (Lafferty and Goldsmith 1999). Consumer’s recommendation intention was measured on two item 7-point scale. The two items were (1) “I will recommend this company and product to others”, and (2) “I am likely to make positive comments about this company and product to others” (Galan-Ladero, Galera-Casquet, and Wymer 2013). Two items were anchored by the terms “strongly disagree”, and “strongly agree”.

### ***Perceived Sincerity (Dependent Variable and Mediator)***

Consumer’s perceived sincerity of the company was used as a dependent variable and mediator in this study. The company’s sincerity is intimately related with the consumer. Consumers get second thoughts whether a company’s support of a prosocial behavior is intended to make a profit the cause or the company while remaining critic of the efforts (Barone, Miyazaki, and Taylor 2000). Company’s prosocial behavior is significantly affect the consumer’s overall attitude to the company. Consumer’s perceived ethics of an internet retailer’s website positively affect trust, attitude, purchase intention, and revisit intention (Limbu, Marco, and Dale 2012). Perceived sincerity of the company by consumers was measured using four item 7-point bipolar scales anchored by ‘not sincere/sincere’, ‘not honest/honest’, ‘manipulate/not manipulate’, and ‘pushy/not pushy’ (Campbell and Kirmani 2000).

## Data Collection

Based on the study 1 and prior researches, pretest for choosing an unbiased product for study 2 was also conducted. Five products including water in the bottle, chocolate cereal bar, wet tissue, jelly, and chocolate were selected for the pretest. 19 participants completed the pretesting questionnaire. The result revealed that chocolate cereal bar is the most neutral product. Therefore chocolate cereal bar was chosen to use in the main research surveys of study 2.

Four surveys were conducted on the internet, using the online research service, Embrain. First, the randomly selected respondents were exposed to one of four conditions of CSR advertisements. Then they were asked to answer the questionnaires. Those responses were automatically stored in the Embrain's database and they were changed into Excel file. The advertisement scenarios used in the surveys are attached in the appendices part.

## Results

In study 2, a total of 430 participants completed the questionnaire. There were 204 males(47.4%) and 226 females(52.6%). The mean age was 35.15(min:20 and max:69). 106 participants(24.7%) were exposed to a controlled condition (advertisement (4)), 106 participants(24.7%) were exposed to a less detail information condition (advertisement (5)), 110 participants(25.6%) were exposed to a more detail information condition (advertisement (6)), and 108 participants(25.1%) were exposed to a more detail and information-open to public condition (advertisement (7)).

**Insert Table 4 about here**

**Insert Figure 6 about here**

Regarding brand attitude, the inter-correlation between the two items is satisfactory at Cronbach alpha level of .91 ( $>0.7$ ). As shown in Table 4 and Figure 6, an ANOVA analysis is used to test the hypotheses 1. According to the results, brand attitude is highest in a more detailed CSR information and information open to public condition, and lowest in a less detailed CSR information condition. Therefore, H1 is supported. Same with the result of study 1, the results also show that brand attitude is relatively higher in a controlled condition without any CSR information than in a less detailed CSR information condition.

**Insert Table 5 about here**

**Insert Figure 7 about here**

As seen in Table 5 and Figure 7, consumers' purchase intention is highest in a more detailed CSR information and information open to public condition, and lowest in a less detailed CSR information condition. Thus, H2 is supported. Same as the previous results, here we also find that consumers' purchase intention is higher in a controlled condition without any CSR information than in a less detailed and unclear CSR information condition.

**Insert Table 6 about here**

**Insert Figure 8 about here**

In terms of consumer's recommendation intention, the inter-correlation between the two items was satisfactory at Cronbach alpha level of .93(>0.7). As depicted in Table 6 and Figure 8, consumers' recommendation intention is highest in a more detailed CSR information and information open to public condition, and lowest in a controlled condition which is different with those previous two tests. Brand attitude and consumer's purchase intention are higher in a controlled condition without any CSR information than in a less detailed CSR information condition, but recommendation intention is higher in a less detailed CSR information condition than controlled condition. This interesting result may be affected by social desirability bias. When doing survey, respondents are often report inaccurate answer for ego-defensive, and choose the answer which is socially acceptable (Maccoby and Maccoby 1954). As a result about purchase intention, respondents show more positive purchase intention in controlled condition than less detailed CSR information. In contrast with purchase intention, recommendation is related with interaction between person and person. Respondents want to be looks like good person by others. Also, donating money is recognized as the prosocial behavior (Weinstein and Ryan 2010). And prosocial behaviors enhance interpersonal attractiveness (Lee and Shrum 2012). Thus respondents shown more positive recommendation intention in less detailed CSR information condition which includes donation than controlled condition which is not related with donation.

**Insert Table 7 about here**

**Insert Figure 9 about here**

Regarding perceived sincerity, the inter-correlation between the four items is satisfactory at Cronbach alpha level of .77 (>0.7). As shown in Table 7 and Figure 9, an ANOVA analysis is used to test the hypotheses 4. According to the results, perceived sincerity is highest in a more detailed CSR information condition, and lowest in a less detailed CSR information condition. Therefore, H4 is supported. Surprisingly, the results show that perceived sincerity is relatively

higher in a controlled condition without any CSR information than in a less detailed CSR information condition. This result shows that CSR information with ambiguous information may cause negative perceived sincerity from consumers.

Through the result of verifying hypotheses 1 to 4, consumers are usually show negative attitude towards the unclear and ambiguous CSR information with less details compared to the clear and detailed CSR information. The important result was that, in terms of brand attitude, purchase intention, and perceived sincerity, consumers show negative attitude towards the unclear and ambiguous CSR information with less details compared to the non-CSR advertising message.

To check the mediating effect by perceived sincerity of degree of CSR information's disclosure on brand attitude, purchase intention, and recommendation intention, sets of regression analyses suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986) was conducted.

Support for mediation would be obtained if (1) the effect of degree of CSR information's disclosure on perceived sincerity is significant, (2) the effect of CSR information's disclosure on brand attitude, purchase intention, and recommendation intention is significant, and (3) the effect of degree of CSR information's disclosure on brand attitude, purchase intention, and recommendation intention is reduced or eliminated when the mediating variable is entered into the analysis.

**Insert Table 8 about here**

**Insert Table 9 about here**

As depicted in the Table 8 and 9, The result was shown that degree of CSR information's disclosure significantly affected perceived sincerity ( $B = 0.189, p < .001$ ).

**Insert Table 10 about here**

**Insert Table 11 about here**

**Insert Table 12 about here**

**Insert Table 13 about here**

**Insert Table 14 about here**

**Insert Table 15 about here**

As shown in the Table 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15, The effect of degree of CSR information's disclosure on brand attitude ( $B = 0.284, p < .001$ ), purchase intention ( $B = 0.154, p < .001$ ), and recommendation intention ( $B = 0.337, p < .001$ ) was also significant. Importantly,

the effect of degree of CSR information's disclosure on brand attitude (from  $B = 0.284$  to  $B = .178$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and recommendation intention (from  $B = 0.337$  to  $B = 0.236$ ,  $p < .001$ ) was reduced when perceived sincerity were entered into the analysis. The effect of degree of CSR information's disclosure on purchase intention was reduced when perceived sincerity were entered into the analysis but not significant (from  $B = 0.154$  to  $B = 0.050$ ,  $p > .05$ ). As a result, partial mediating effect by perceived sincerity of degree of CSR information's disclosure on brand attitude and recommendation intention was verified, and perfect mediating effect by perceived sincerity of degree of CSR information's disclosure on purchase intention was verified. Thus H5, H6, and H7 are supported,

## Conclusion and Discussion

Result of studies 1 and 2 indicates that the degree of CSR information's disclosure significantly influences consumers' brand attitude, purchase intentions, recommendation intention, and perceived sincerity. Study 2 shows that consumers are likely to show high perceived sincerity to the CSR information with more details and information open to public than less details.

Amazingly, consumers tend to show less favorable responses like negative brand attitude and negative purchase intention towards the CSR activities with less information than no CSR activities. This research also shows that perceived sincerity has a mediating effect between the degree of CSR information's disclosure on brand attitude, purchase intention, and recommendation intention. Given that subjective and deceptive advertising messages cause distrust towards a company (Darke and Ritchie 2007), it is presumable that unclear CSR information may worse consumers' attitudinal and behavioral responses towards the CSR activities. Marketers, therefore, should be cautious about CSR information clarity when they implement CSR activities. Generally, marketers assume that using CSR marketing must be useful and bring positive outcomes anyway. However, our research findings evidently show that not performing CSR marketing is sometimes better if marketers would not provide the clear and detailed CSR information.

### **Future Research**

The current research findings show that consumers are likely to show more purchase intention, recommendation intention, positive brand attitude, and perceived sincerity when the CSR information is given with more details than one with less details. Further researches can be conducted to examine whether the results are consistent or not. For example, other variables such as a company's credibility, a brand's value, or a product's price can be considered in the further research.



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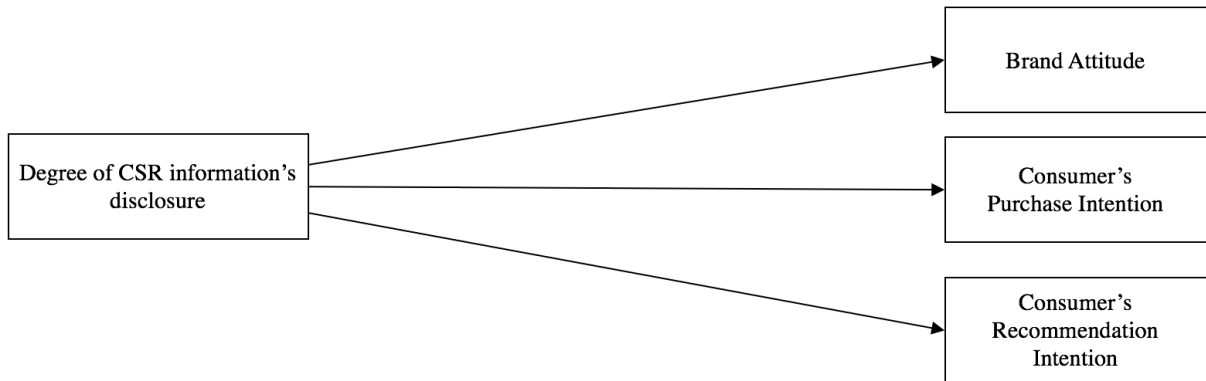
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**FIGURE 1**

Research Model





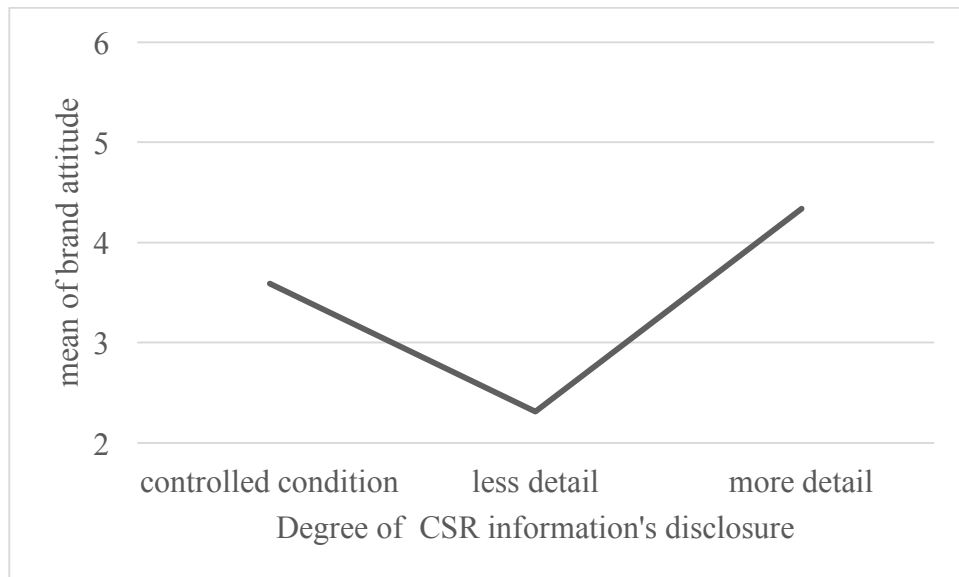
**TABLE 1**

ANOVA - Brand Attitude

<b>ANOVA</b>					
Brand Attitude					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	<i>p</i> -value
Between Groups	73.116	2	36.558	45.904	.000
Within Groups	117.071	147	.796		
Total	190.187	149			

**FIGURE 2**

Mean of Brand Attitude



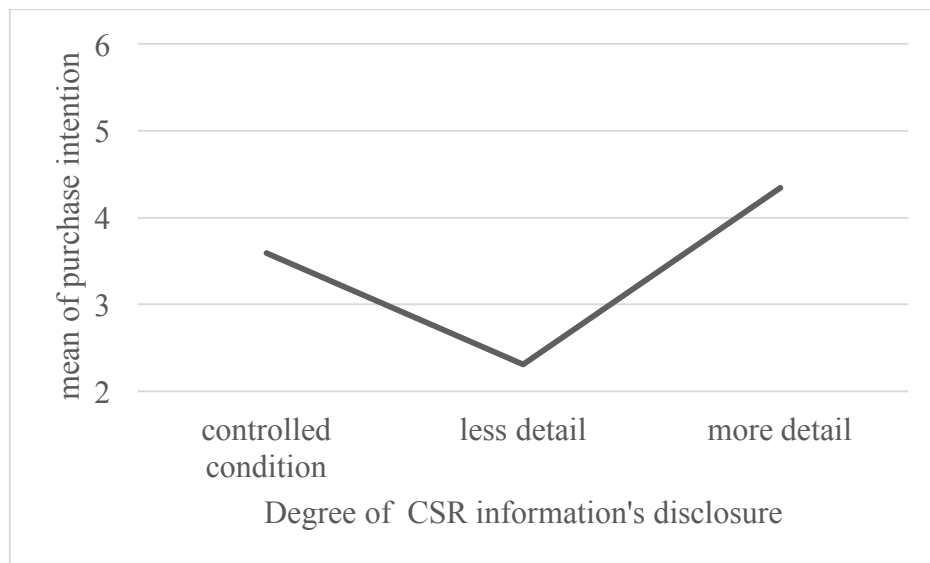
**TABLE 2**

ANOVA – Purchase Intention

<b>ANOVA</b>					
Purchase Intention					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	<i>p</i> -value
Between Groups	84.224	2	42.112	42.612	.000
Within Groups	145.273	147	.988		
Total	229.497	149			

**FIGURE 3**

Mean of Purchase Intention



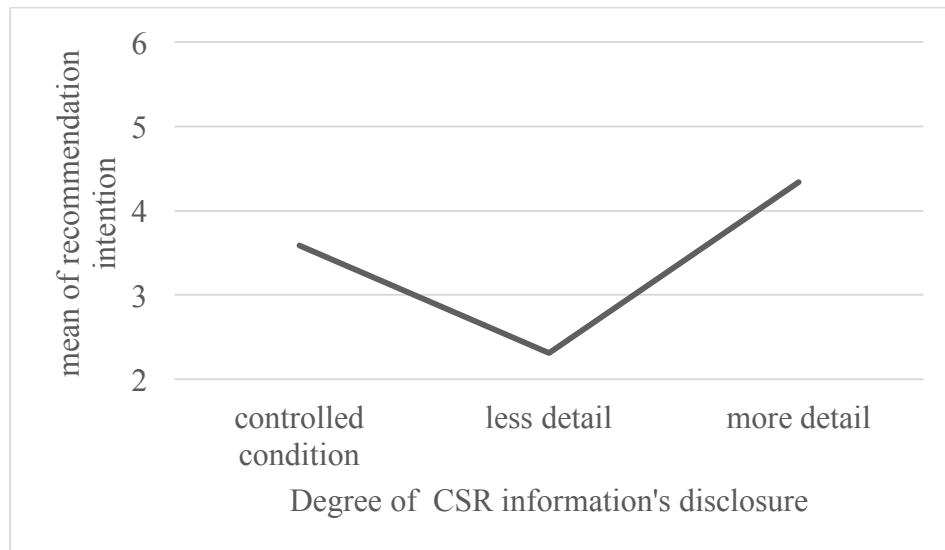
**TABLE 3**

ANOVA – Recommendation Intention

ANOVA					
Recommendation Intention					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	<i>p</i> -value
Between Groups	105.363	2	52.682	38.431	.000
Within Groups	201.510	147	1.371		
Total	306.873	149			

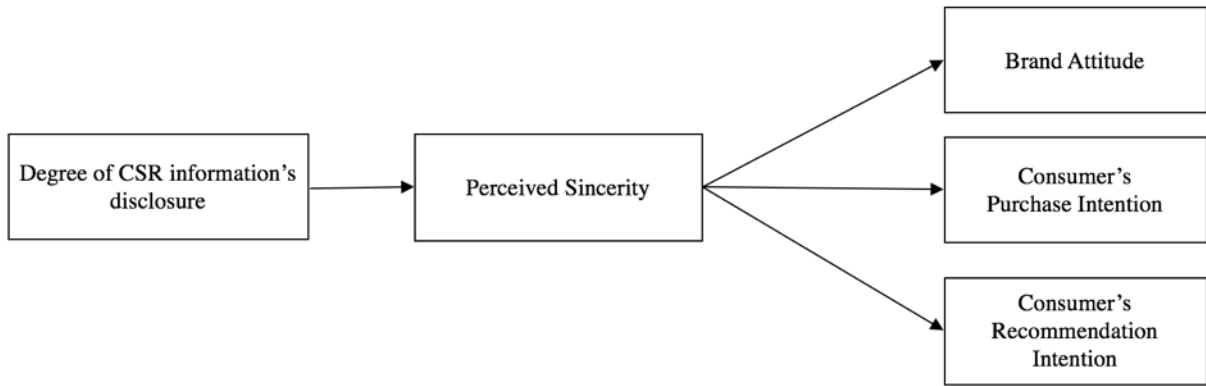
**FIGURE 4**

Mean of Recommendation Intention



**FIGURE 5**

Research Model



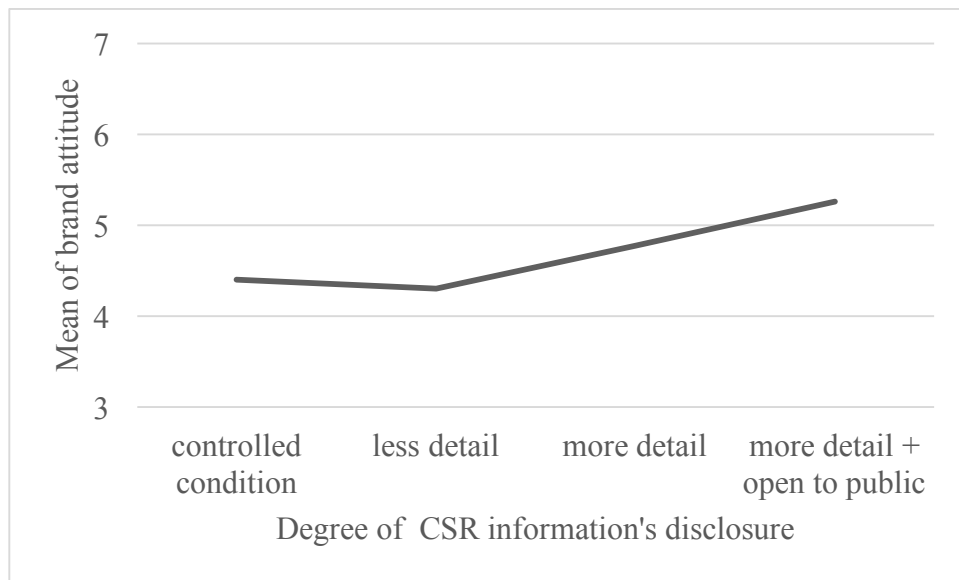
**TABLE 4**

ANOVA - Brand Attitude

<b>ANOVA</b>					
Brand Attitude					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	<i>p</i> -value
Between Groups	60.287	3	20.096	15.510	.000
Within Groups	551.955	426	1.296		
Total	612.242	429			

**FIGURE 6**

Mean of Brand Attitude



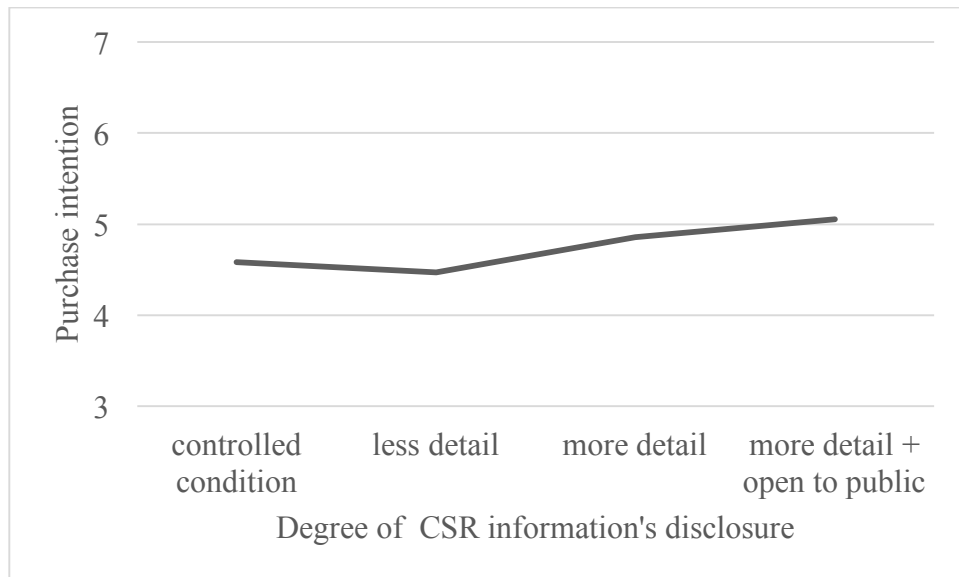
**TABLE 5**

ANOVA – Purchase Intention

<b>ANOVA</b>					
Purchase Intention					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	<i>p</i> -value
Between Groups	22.370	3	7.457	4.465	.004
Within Groups	711.490	426	1.670		
Total	733.860	429			

**FIGURE 7**

Purchase Intention



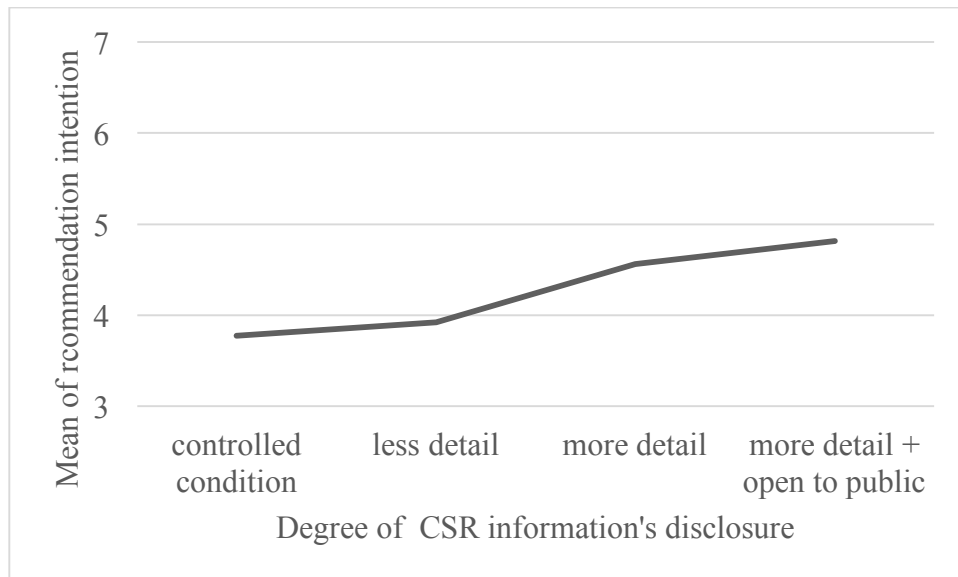
**TABLE 6**

ANOVA – Recommendation Intention

ANOVA					
Recommendation Intention					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	<i>p</i> -value
Between Groups	80.305	3	26.768	19.350	.000
Within Groups	589.313	426	1.383		
Total	669.619	429			

**FIGURE 8**

Mean of Recommendation Intention



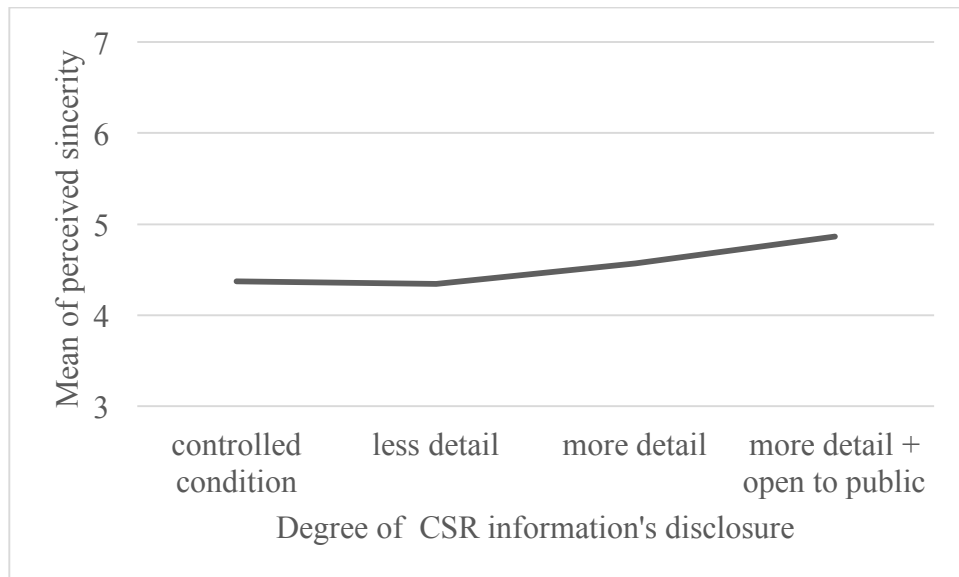
**TABLE 7**

ANOVA – Perceived Sincerity

<b>ANOVA</b>					
Perceived Sincerity					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	<i>p</i> -value
Between Groups	18.574	3	6.191	6.306	.000
Within Groups	418.254	426	.982		
Total	436.828	429			

**FIGURE 9**

Mean of Perceived Sincerity





**TABLE 8**

Results of regression equations testing mediation

– Perceived sincerity

<b>ANOVA<sup>a</sup></b>					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	<i>p</i> -value
1 Regression	15.569	1	15.569	15.818	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	421.259	428	.984		
Total	436.828	429			
a. Dependent Variable: perceived sincerity					
b. Predictors: (Constant), Condition					

**TABLE 9**

Results of regression equations testing mediation

– Perceived sincerity

<b>Coefficients<sup>a</sup></b>					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	<i>p</i> -value
1 (Constant)	4.111	.118		34.890	.000
Condition	.171	.043	.189	3.977	.000
a. Dependent Variable: perceived sincerity					

**TABLE 10**

Results of regression equations testing mediation

– Brand Attitude and Perceived Sincerity

<b>ANOVA<sup>a</sup></b>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	<i>p</i> -value
1	Regression	49.352	1	49.352	37.525	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	562.890	428	1.315		
	Total	612.242	429			
2	Regression	236.564	2	118.282	134.441	.000 <sup>c</sup>
	Residual	375.678	427	.880		
	Total	612.242	429			
a. Dependent Variable: brand attitude						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Condition						
c. Predictors: (Constant), Condition, perceived sincerity						

**TABLE 11**

Results of regression equations testing mediation

– Brand Attitude and Perceived Sincerity

<b>Coefficients<sup>a</sup></b>						
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i> -value
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1 (Constant)	3.926	.136			28.822	.000
Condition	.304	.050	.284		6.126	.000
2 (Constant)	1.185	.218			5.426	.000
Condition	.190	.041	.178		4.601	.000
Perceived sincerity	.667	.046	.563		14.587	.000
a. Dependent Variable: brand attitude						

**TABLE 12**

Results of regression equations testing mediation

– Purchase Intention and Perceived Sincerity

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	<i>p</i> -value	
1 Regression	17.312	1	17.312	10.341	.001 <sup>b</sup>	
Residual	716.548	428	1.674			
Total	733.860	429				
2 Regression	230.148	2	115.074	97.549	.000 <sup>c</sup>	
Residual	503.712	427	1.180			
Total	733.860	429				
a. Dependent Variable: purchase intention						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Condition						
c. Predictors: (Constant), Condition, perceived sincerity						

**TABLE 13**

Results of regression equations testing mediation

– Purchase Intention and Perceived Sincerity

<b>Coefficients<sup>a</sup></b>					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	<i>p</i> -value
1 (Constant)	4.293	.154		27.932	.000
Condition	.180	.056	.154	3.216	.001
2 (Constant)	1.370	.253		5.418	.000
Condition	.059	.048	.050	1.226	.221
Perceived sincerity	.711	.053	.548	13.432	.000
a. Dependent Variable: purchase intention					

**TABLE 14**

Results of regression equations testing mediation

– Recommendation Intention and Perceived Sincerity

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	<i>p</i> -value	
1 Regression	75.926	1	75.926	54.736	.000 <sup>b</sup>	
Residual	593.693	428	1.387			
Total	669.619	429				
2 Regression	258.994	2	129.497	134.662	.000 <sup>c</sup>	
Residual	410.624	427	.962			
Total	669.619	429				
a. Dependent Variable: recommendation intention						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Condition						
c. Predictors: (Constant), Condition, perceived sincerity						

**TABLE 15**

Results of regression equations testing mediation

– Recommendation Intention and Perceived Sincerity

<b>Coefficients<sup>a</sup></b>					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	<i>p</i> -value
1 (Constant)	3.329	.140		23.795	.000
Condition	.377	.051	.337	7.398	.000
2 (Constant)	.618	.228		2.708	.007
Condition	.264	.043	.236	6.121	.000
Perceived sincerity	.659	.048	.532	13.797	.000
a. Dependent Variable: recommendation intention					

**TABLE 16**

Measures(Study 2)

Items	Cronbach's alpha	Source
Brand Attitude: Two item 7-point bipolar scales anchored by negative/positive and dislike/like	0.91	Nan and Heo 2007 Völckner, Sattler, and Kaufmann 2008
Purchase Intention: 7-point bipolar scales anchored by improbable/probable	-	Lafferty and Goldsmith 1999
Recommendation Intention: Two item 7-point scales anchored by strongly disagree/strongly agree (1) I will recommend this company and product to others (2) I am likely to make positive comments about this company and product to others	0.93	Galan-Ladero, Galera- Casquet, and Wymer 2013
Perceived Sincerity: Four item 7-point bipolar scales anchored by not sincere/sincere, not honest/honest, manipulate/not manipulate, and pushy/not pushy	0.77	Campbell and Kirmani 2000

## Appendices

*(Advertisement manipulations used for research)*

### Advertisement 1 (In the controlled condition)

#### Company A's chocolate cereal bar



1. Not fry, Low calories by baking
2. No trans fat, No cholesterol
3. Deliver on the same day  
if you complete settlement by 4 p.m.

### Advertisement 2 (CSR information with less details)

#### Company A's chocolate cereal bar



1. Not fry, Low calories by baking
2. No trans fat, No cholesterol
3. Deliver on the same day  
if you complete settlement by 4 p.m.
4. A portion of profit  
will be donated to neighbors in need

### Advertisement 3 (CSR information with more details)

#### Company A's chocolate cereal bar



1. Not fry, Low calories by baking
2. No trans fat, No cholesterol
3. Deliver on the same day  
if you complete settlement by 4 p.m.
4. A portion of profit  
will be donated to neighbors in need  
→ A breakdown of donation will open to the  
public transparently in internet homepage  
on the 28<sup>th</sup> of each month

**Advertisement 4** (In the controlled condition)

**Company A's  
chocolate cereal bar**



1. Not fry, Low calories by baking
2. No trans fat, No cholesterol
3. Deliver on the same day  
If you complete settlement by 4 p.m.

**Advertisement 5** (CSR information with less details)

**Company A's  
chocolate cereal bar**



1. Not fry, Low calories by baking
2. No trans fat, No cholesterol
3. Deliver on the same day  
If you complete settlement by 4 p.m.
4. A portion of profit  
will be donated to neighbors in need

**Advertisement 6** (CSR information with more details)

**Company A's  
chocolate cereal bar**



1. Not fry, Low calories by baking
2. No trans fat, No cholesterol
3. Deliver on the same day  
If you complete settlement by 4 p.m.
4. 14% of profits will be donated to  
corporation for poorly-fed children

**Advertisement 7** (CSR information with more details and open to the public)

**Company A's  
chocolate cereal bar**



1. Not fry, Low calories by baking
2. No trans fat, No cholesterol
3. Deliver on the same day  
If you complete settlement by 4 p.m.
4. 14% of profits will be donated to  
corporation for poorly-fed children  
→ Details of donation will be opened  
clearly in the internet homepage  
on each month 28